

MINUTES

Quarterly Meeting of the
MISSOURI VETERANS COMMISSION
Held, pursuant to notice
Tuesday, January 24, 2006 — 10:00 AM
Room 400, Harry S. Truman State Office Bldg.
Jefferson City, Missouri

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Roll Call
In attendance: **Chairman Carson Ross; Vice Chairman Joe Frank; Member Emmett Fairfax; Member Bernadette Miller; Member General Arvid West**
- C. Introductions
Guests and staff present.
 - 1. Guest: **Larry Daniels**, Adjutant DAV; **Roderick Lavigne**, DAV; **Terry Tabor**, DAV; **David Gerke**, DAV; **Tracy Davis**, American Legion; **Lowell Brown**, American Legion; **Robert Brown Sr.**, American Legion; **Lee Smith**, DAV; **Norm Combs**, FRA; **Stephen Gaither**, Public Relations, VA Medical Center Columbia; **Wil Dailey**, VFW, VVA; **Will Helton**, American Legion; **Julio Bambini**, American Legion; **Marvin Suthers**, American Legion; **John Neger**, American Legion; **Jack Calegari**, American Legion; **Ronald Haden**, American Legion; **Ken Bonar**, American Legion; **David Wolf**, DAV; **Jack Matthews**, President MVC Foundation, Inc.; **Sam Yancey**, American Legion; **Dick Skaggs**, AMVETS; **Wayne Craig**, AMVETS; **Wayne Wallace**, AMVETS; **James Schwent**, AMVETS; **Carl Jernigan**, AMVETS; **William Pettys**, MAVO; **Michael Taylor**, DAV; **David Voyles**, American Legion; **Lynn Dorrell**, Adjutant, American Legion; **Jerry Jones**, MOVFW; **Patrick Heavey**, St. Louis Veterans Business Resource Center; **John Eckhoff**, St. Louis County Human Services; **Kathy Sturgeon**, St. Louis County Human Services; **Jack White**, DAV; **Dale Akeman**, DAV; **John Collins**, DAV; **Robert Wright**, DAV; **Wade Harris**, American Legion; **David Combs**, FRA; **Joey Sillyman**, DAV & American Legion; **Michael Hill**, VFW; **Bud Whyte**, Military Order of Purple Heart; **Howard Johnson**, Military Order of Purple Heart; **Clayton Jones**, Military Order of Purple Heart; **Sharon Gulick**, MO Department of Economic Development; **MO State Adjutant General King Sidwell**; **Jeremy Amick**, MONG State Benefits Advisor; **Jim Ringland**, Special Forces; **Carl Hargus**, Special Forces Florissant Veterans Commission; **Daniel Turner**, American Legion; **David Anderson**, American Legion; **Don Sibole**, American Legion;

Richard Heigert, President MAVO; **Ernie Lee**, MOAA; **James Whitfield**, Western Area Coordinator, MO Military Funeral Honors Program; **Col. Wayne Medley**, MO Military Funeral Honors Program; **Deborah Halter**, VFW; **Dean Taylor**, MMFHP; **Walt Ridenhour**, DAV; **June Ridenhour**, DAVA; **Jane Daniels**, DAVA.

2. Staff: **Ronald Taylor**, Executive Director; **Jill Talken**, Executive Secretary; **Hal Dulle**, Deputy Director; **Jess Rasmussen**, Director Higginsville Cemetery; **Anne Payne**, Superintendent of Homes; **Stan Baughn**, Director Service to Veterans Program; **Tim Norton**, Director of Planning and Property Management; **Pat Rowe Kerr**, Veterans Ombudsman; **Patty Faenger**, Administrator, St. James Veterans Home; **Jan Rau**, Administrator, Cape Girardeau Veterans Home; **Bob Harvey**, Supervisor STV Program St. Louis Region; **John Burgess**, Supervisor STV Program, Northwest Region; **Jim Hurst**, Supervisor STV Program, Northeast Region; **Jerilyn Cornelius**, STV Program, St. Louis Region Office; **Karen Etzler**, Veteran Service Officer, Northwest Region; **Ken Swearengin**, Director, Bloomfield Veterans Cemetery; **Jerry Quigley**, Director Jacksonville Veterans Cemetery; **Randy Howerton**, Director, Springfield Veterans Cemetery, **Chuck Wooten**, Cemetery Coordinator, Springfield; **Daniel Bell**, Public Relation Officer, St. Louis Veterans Home;

- D. Approval of November 1, 2005 Commission Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Fairfax made a motion to accept the minutes and Commissioner Miller seconded the motion. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as recorded.

Chairman Carson Ross presented James Ernie Lee with a plaque of appreciation for this commitment and leadership in serving the Veterans of the State of Missouri as Chairman Missouri Association of Veterans Organizations.

Chairman Carson Ross presented Carl Niewoehner with a plaque of appreciation commitment and leadership as Chairman of the Missouri Veterans Commission June 7, 2000 to November 17, 2003.

Chairman Ross opened the meeting with thanking everyone for coming to participate in Veterans Appreciation Day and advised that with all their support is what makes the Commission a success.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

Management Report: Executive Director Comments: Ronald Taylor

Commission Update – Ronald Taylor reported that based on the decision of the Commission sponsoring the Veterans History Project we have sent off for materials for the Library of Congress Veterans History Project

Partnership. The application process should be completed and project in place within the next 30 to 60 days. The St. Louis Veterans Home has started the project by interviewing residents of the home.

Ron Taylor asked the Commissioners approval to change the residence requirements for the State Veterans Cemeteries. The state currently required 180 days residence in Missouri to be eligible. He noted that the federal Department of Veterans Affairs encourages states to rescind its residency requirements for burial. Currently Missouri receives \$300 per each burial from the VA, however, there would be no significant net gain. Missouri's current cremation rate has been 30-35% and rising. Vice Chairman Frank made a motion to approve the change in eligibility rules for burial at the Missouri State Veterans Cemetery. Commissioner Fairfax seconded the motion. By a voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

Budget Update – Julie Miller, Chief Accountant reported the Governor's recommendations include increase in MVC core budget for FY2007, a 4% pay plan increase for all state employees, and a two step repositioning for direct care staff, 3 additional VSO's, and a replacement backhoe at the Springfield Veterans Cemetery and also included is funding for the Ombudsman Program this would be a total increase in Administration, Homes and Veterans Service Officer program of \$385,500. Chairman Ross stated the Commission along with the Service Organizations presented testimony at both the House and Senate Budget Committees and noted was very well received. Ms Miller noted that for the Veterans Homes the Governor has recommended additional funding for the pharmacy/medical supply, fuel cost and the general pay plan items and two step repositioning for direct care staffing. Also a recommendation was made for overtime budget of 2 million dollars. This would be a total increase for the Homes of \$5.9 million dollars. The core budget for FY2007 would be \$2.7 million dollars with a total Governor's recommendation for the Commission, including the increases, being \$69 million dollars for all programs.

Missouri Veterans Homes: Anne Payne, Superintendent of Homes

Homes Program – Anne Payne recognized the Homes Administrators in the audience. Ms. Payne shared with the Commissioners information pertaining to the previous presentation by James Whitfield regarding the Geriatric Summer Nursing Externship Course proposal at CMSU. She stated that the states regulations allow the Commission to hire graduates without the externship program. The new graduates will go through the orientation process and the Commission will make sure they receive the skills and training that they need in order to take care of the residents. Ms. Payne has spoken to the University and Mr. Whitfield regarding this matter.

Ms. Payne distributed to the Commissioners the Census/Waiting List/Donation/Volunteer Hours Statistics Homes Report for period ending December 31, 2005. Currently there are 1,149 on the waiting list for Homes admission and 942 on waiting list. A total of \$316,612 was donated (excluding materials) and 70,498 volunteer hours for the first six months of this fiscal year were reported.

Ms. Payne provided the Commissioners a Nationwide Statistical handout of State Homes Per Diem Program Overview for Annual FY2000 to FY2005 data. She reported there is a total of 116 State Veteran Nursing Homes in 48 states and that the national average cost per diem per day is \$195.00, Missouri's cost is \$144.00 per day.

Anne Payne advised the Commissioners that the St. Louis Veterans Home has an Administrator position vacancy. The first round of interviews should be completed by February 1 and the top three candidates will be interviewed in mid February. The position should be offered in early March.

Construction Update: Tim Norton, Director of Planning and Property Management

Construction Update – (Handouts) Tim Norton distributed to the Commissioners a construction update as January 24, 2006.

Ft. Leonard Wood Veterans Cemetery: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has completed the studies required to transfer the property to the Missouri Veterans Commission/State of Missouri. We have been advised that the land should be ready for transfer by late February or early March 2006. they have been given Governor Blunt's contact information in order in setting up a date for the land transfer signing and ceremony.

Warrensburg and Cameron Veterans Homes hot water upgrades project will include two hot water heaters and re-routing of piping. A pre-bid meeting is scheduled for January 12, 2006. It is estimated this project will take 4 months to complete.

Cape Girardeau Veterans Home, HAVC project consist of upgrading the heating, air conditioning and ventilating system, replacing flooring, renovating and expanding the kitchen, adding a solarium, dementia dining/activity room and painting resident rooms. The main kitchen, serving area, dining room has been completed and turned over to the facility. They have also begun HVAC and other renovation in one resident living area in A-wing. Once A-wing is completed they will

progress to B then C-wing. The contract completion date is scheduled for October 2006.

St. Louis Veterans Home, roof replacement project includes replacing the existing roof with a new 40 year architectural shingle roof, adding a security fence around the back of the facility and replacing exterior doors. Project is completed, although we found a fire department connection at the back of the facility that requires the fire hose to go over our new fence. To avoid delays in hooking up the fire hose MVC is adding an additional gate with magnetic lock. This has been awarded and contractor should begin installing new gate in the next few weeks.

Springfield Veterans Cemetery, columbarium wall project has been completed. One outstanding item is the front slope leading up to the new columbarium wall. The contractor has installed erosion control and agreed to complete the upgrades in the spring. We are currently holding funds for this work until they are completed.

Mexico Veterans Home, floor replacement design is underway. Design should be complete and project out for bid in late spring of 2006, with a 4 to 5 month construction period.

Cape Girardeau Veterans Home, roof replacement design is underway and should be ready to go out for bid this spring. Once this project is out, construction should take approximately 5 to 6 months.

Cameron parking design of an additional 27 parking spaces is nearing completion and should be ready to go out for bid by March/April 2006. Project should take approximately 120 days, once construction has begun.

St. Louis Veterans Home: Currently designing electrical upgrades that include adding various kitchen equipment to emergency generator, adding additional electrical outlets in resident rooms and nurse stations that are connected to emergency generator and a quick connection for a portable generator that will be able to carry chillers for cooling should a power outage occur during hot weather.

Per the request of Commissioner West at the previous meeting, Tim Norton distributed site plans for all MVC facilities.

A concern by one of the meeting attendees was raised if whether the Warrensburg Veterans Home was upgrading the facilities security system. Chairman Ross requested that the security issue be put in writing and sent to the Superintendent of the Homes Program to get addressed.

Service to Veterans Program: Stan Baughn, Director, Service to Veterans Program

Service to Veterans – (Handout) Stan Baughn reported to the Commissioners that 15 Supermarkets were held last year serving over 1,941 veterans and their dependents.

The toll free number has received over 8,600 calls and of that 4,700 were good calls referred to Service Officers for action. Mr. Baughn noted that the Supermarkets are important in that they are largely responsible for the increase in benefits for Missouri's veterans.

Ms. Baughn reported that the Grants Program is on track with disbursements of grants.

Karen Etzler, Missouri Veterans Womens Coordinator and Veterans Service Officer for the Commission distributed to the Commissioners the newly designed newsletter that she is responsible for. She also advised that she attended the National Conference for Women Veterans in Texas last year where she learned several ideas: creating a sticker, lapel pin and the newsletter. She noted that the newsletter has generated 62 registration forms interested in Women Veterans. Ms. Etzler informed the Commissioners that she writes to all females veterans recently discharged from active duty and notifies them of MVC Service Officers in their area. She has been also been visiting areas with a display booth and plans to be present at the 2007 National Veterans Womens Coordinator Conference in Branson. Over 34,000 women veterans reside in Missouri and she is working to get them connected with their benefits. Commissioner Miller is also working with Ms. Etzler on this program. Ms. Etzler thanked Bonnie Mc-Neill Boyt, MVC Trainer and Pam Robbins, VSO Secretary for their hard work in assisting her.

Upcoming Supermarkets:

March 18, 2006 Palmyra

April 29, 2006 Warrensburg

Mr. Baughn noted that current returning home soldiers numbers are low at Supermarkets due to Jeremy Amick, State Benefits Advisors recent involvement with benefit briefings across the state each lasting approximately 2 hours in length. Jeremy Amick advised the Commissioners that the briefings are held on weekend drills and are attended by VA, Small Business Administration, VA Medical Centers, Vet Centers, TRICARE, and dental, MNG Education Office, MVC, DESE, Labor and the Retirement Service office. He also stated that information is published in the BEARFACTS and he often visits medical hold at Ft.

Leonard Wood to brief patients on benefits. Ron Taylor noted that the out processing of the active duty members is catching most of those however the Guard and Reservists still need attention.

Carl Hargus, Florissant Veterans Commission reported to the Commissioners that their Commission is sending out Welcome Home Packets to returning home soldiers.

Cemeteries Update: Jess Rasmussen, Director Higginsville Cemetery

Cemetery Program – (Handouts) Jess Rasmussen reported to the Commissioners the Cemetery Program has conducted a total of 3,438 burials and 12,079 pre-certifications as of January 24, 2006. Springfield leads with 2,228 burials. Mr. Rasmussen introduced the new Cemetery Director in Springfield, Randy Howerton to the Commissioners.

Mr. Rasmussen distributed to the Commissioners a county map indicating total interments by county.

He reported the Commission is still waiting on for the formal written evaluation from the National Cemetery Administration inspection conducted at the Springfield and Higginsville Cemetery. He noted they are working very closely with the VA to meet their standards.

VSO Grants: Stan Baughn, Director Service to Veterans Program

VSO Grant Program- Hal Dulle introduced George Newell, Vice Chairman, MAVO; Bill Rupp, Legislative Officer Marine Corps League; and Jesse Jones, Senior Vice Commander VFW State of MO. The Commission has granted \$750,000 and is presently polling grantees on their expenditures because of additional request for money.

Bob Harvey, Veteran Service Officer, St. Louis Regional VA office advised that as of December figures from VA indicate that the VA is paying live veterans out of a population of 550,000 Missouri Veterans a total of 61,000 plus veterans benefits in the State of Missouri. There is an increase from \$593 million in 2005 to presently \$655 million a year coming into Missouri Veterans. He noted the Commission is continuing to look at new avenues to find veterans who may be eligible for benefits.

Hal Dulle recognized Tracy Davis, American Legion; Lynn Harris, DAV for their testimony given at the House and Senate Budget hearing. Hal Dulle expressed his appreciation to all the Service Officers at the Commission and Service Organizations for their hard work.

Ernie Lee commented that in 1999 Missouri veterans were paid \$423 million and today they are receiving \$655 million which is an increase of \$232 million.

Outreach: Pat Rowe Kerr, Veterans Ombudsman

Outreach – (Handouts) Pat Rowe Kerr explained the Ombudsman Program to the guest attending the Commission meeting. She noted that Operation Outreach ended 2005 on a high note with notification from the Fallen Patriot Fund that one of Missouri's very injured Army Reservists would receive \$15,000 contribution to assist with their financial needs.

Ms. Kerr recognized Jeremy Amick and thanked him working with her in assisting in getting the word out to more and more of the returning soldiers. Ron Taylor advised that the Commission is working on a Memorandum of Agreement with the Missouri National Guard and other federal & state agencies in order to reach the returning veterans.

Ms. Kerr reported that currently the billboard outreach program is underway and billboards can be purchased around the state for the purpose in advertising for the MO Military Family Relief Fund and the Veterans Trust Fund check off boxes on the Missouri State Tax Return. Those interested in sponsoring can contact Pat Rowe-Kerr.

To date over a quarter of a million dollars has been coordinated during outreach efforts by working with Veteran Service Organizations and private and corporate donors and 8 service members' homes have been kept out of foreclosure. Ms. Kerr reported that as we continue to reach out to the Guard and Reserve they find more and more are not understanding that while they may have listed their injuries when they were de-mobilizing and now may be part of the VA "health" system they are not understanding that does not make them part of the VA "disability" system.

In developing the "Heroes Helping Heroes" recognition program MVC is coordinating a way to bring greater recognition to the men and women of prior conflicts who step up to the plate continually. Certificates of Appreciation to those "Heroes Helping Heroes" are going out over the next months and will continue.

Ms. Kerr reported that the Veterans Ombudsman has been appointed to a 3 year appointment with the Brain Injury Association of America.

The Vietnam Memorial Moving Wall was a great success and during the month of November Governor Blunt designated it as Missouri Military History Month. Thousands of individuals visited the Wall and or participated in Missouri Military History Month.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

State Adjutant General King Sidwell informed those attending that there are 10,000 members of the Guard and 7,300 have been deployed since the Global War on Terrorism. He thanked the Commission for their support.

Col. Wayne Medley, Missouri Military Funeral Honors Program reported that effective January 19th the MMFH Program has coordinated 48,416 services which is averaging around 25 services per day. They are serving approximately 60-65% of the veterans with a 99.8 success ratio. In December 2005 they coordinated the highest number services at 821. All 15 locations are working diligently with the National Guard Federal Program in getting blue uniforms for team members. Ceremonial Buglers performance has not received any feedback and they have proven to being very reliable. They do continue to find live buglers whenever possible.

James Whitfield, Western Area Coordinator, Missouri Military Funeral Honors Program noted he is happy to continue to serve.

Carl Niewoehner, Past Chairman MVC informed the Commission that Gary Campbell, Director VA Medical Center is retiring in March. Chairman Ross wished to express a note of thanks on behalf of the Commission that Mr. Campbell will certainly be missed.

Norm Combs, FRA advised that due to term limits is important to educate our Veterans Caucus group.

Legislative Report – Hal Dulle advised that currently 45-50 members have signed up for the Veterans Caucus group headed by Representative Dusenberg. Mr. Dulle noted that Richard Heigert and Ernie Lee have met with Representative Dusenberg and have asked to meet at a meeting in April.

The Commission is tracking 20 pieces of legislation thus far with 3 having impact to the Commission:

HB978 – (J. Smith) Establishes the Vietnam War Medallion Program. The cost to the state would be \$900,000 to 1 million. A hearing is scheduled for February 1.

HB1141 – (J. Jackson) Changes the distribution of some of the proceeds in the Gaming Commission Fund. The first \$500,000 will continue to be appropriated on a per-capita basis to certain cities and counties that have demonstrated a need for funding community neighborhood organization programs for the homeless and to deter gang-

related violence and crimes. The remaining money in the fund would reallocate 25% of gaming funds to Veterans' Commission Capital Improvement Trust Fund. Hearing is scheduled for February 1 at 8:00 a.m.

SB578 – (Shields) Prohibits protest activities during funeral services. Hearing scheduled for today on the House at 5:00 p.m.

Richard Heigert, Chairman MAVO and Ernie Lee, Legislative Chairman MAVO invited everyone to attend the MAVO meeting today at 1:30 p.m. The meeting will be attended by Governor Blunt, Lt. Governor Kinder and the VFW Commander in Room 400, HST. They informed the Commissioners that they testified before the House and Senate in support of MVC budget request.

NEXT MEETING

The next Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 19, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. St. James Veterans Home.

The Commission closed the meeting to conduct an executive session for the purpose to discuss personnel matters and legal issues held pursuant to Section 610.021, Subsection (3) RSMo.

The meeting was reopened.

With no further business before the Commission the meeting was adjourned.



Ronald L. Taylor, Secretary